"those enduring matinee idols"

FOR THE SERIAL LOVERS WHO STILL REMEMBER SATURDAY MATINEES

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER, 1969
VOLUME 1 - CHAPTER 1

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WHY?

You are looking at what started out in 1966 as a fun project and just happened to explode into Captain Marvel, as Billy Batson did. In-other-words, collecting paraphernalia pertaining to serials grew into an expensive hobby, partially due to the fact it took this editor on flights of fancy to New York and Los Angeles in search of more material. Then came the birth pains associated with the idea of writing a book on the subject—pains that had their beginnings in 1968 (aiming for a delivery date of February, 1970). Soon that idea of a single conception (just one book) began to take on all of the restrictions of planned birth control. *Why* have only one child when you can have a litter and enjoy the multiple pleasures of feeding/tending a large family? Thus, the notion of sharing the escapades of THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS took off in this direction—a cohesive, progressive look at serials in a magazine format. The change means for this editor that involvement with serials assumes a fun/hobby/business status, as it should be. Hopefully, THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS will help satisfy the gluttonous appetite of all serial enthusiasts in regular, steady installments. These "feedings" will come every other month (Oct., Dec., Feb., April, June, and Aug.), and each promises to consist of *no less* than 12 pages of a variety of appetizing entrees. Plans for next October are to have an obese "anniversary" edition that will include a cumulative index. Mailing date will always be on the first Saturday of the publication month. SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION is on page 8.

OF THINGS TO COME. A sagacious look at many of the "thrillodramas" of the 30's and 40's. Typical of the rare material forthcoming in THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS is this photo. You probably recognize the legendary Edward Vernon Rickenbacker, who just happened to author the comic strip ACE DRUMMOND (filmed in 1936). At that time, he was also general manager (later owner) of Eastern Airlines. In 1934, "Rick" personally set a transcontinental flying record in a transport plane: 12 hours, 3 minutes, 50 seconds. Laughable? Not really. 35 years from now, we'll be looking back on today's aviation feats with a wry smile.

For the record, no issue of THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS will ever contain editorial material unrelated to those actors, actresses, directors, stuntmen, producers (and their films) who made Saturday matinees happy occasions.

In time we hope to add a *lively* "letters from our readers" column that should clear up differences on statistical data as well as shed some light on facts long dormant.

Most agonizing decision to make (and in time *will* prove the wisest) was electing to set aside a majority of the pages in THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS to discussing each serial in chronological order. Agonizing because the editor's files are literally "bulging" with photos and scripts (much of it rare) covering the 1936-1945 decade. Certainly most serial addicts, if not all, will agree that it was not until 1936 that the motion picture chapter-play really reached the age of puberty.

Since this editor had been around for less than 3 years when the first "sound" serial, KING OF THE KONGO, reached the screen in 1929,

WHY?

it is (naturally) quite impossible to have been in attendance at the king's coronation. For that matter, the first recollection of sampling the joys of Saturday matinees came in early 1934 with BURN'EM UP BARNES. *Total recall* goes back as long ago as late '34 when MYSTERY MOUNTAIN became a Saturday "must", right thru chapter 12 and the unmasking of the "Rattler."

The villain (that magnificent perpetuator of evil) was more often than not this editor's idol since he displayed decidedly more imagination, initiative, and sheer stamina than his youthful pursuer masquerading as a sympathetic mountie, plain-clothes detective, uniformed cop, extroverted college student, inquisitive juvenile, or mini-skirted jungle queen assigned to the very long task of foiling his machinations. This does not go to say that *all* heroes were inept, tho the perils suffered by many were simply due to damned carelessness!

Forty serials were released between August 20, 1929, and December 31, 1933 — "THE EMBRYONIC YEARS." While this editor was indeed alive and kicking during those years, actually participating in the activity he was not. From the bits and pieces unburied and spliced together, perhaps not too much was missed. Regardless, it is unfair to assume the wry role of a critic and comment too liberally on what transpired while the embryo grew. To be most honest and objective, he must stand back and view those first forty-serials from the vantage point of a nosey guest.

Later will follow a more definitive perspective on serials: "THE FETUS YEAR" (1934); "THE INCIPIENT YEAR" (1935); "THE TEN WONDERFUL YEARS" (1936-1945); "THE WANING YEARS" (1946-1954); and, eventually, "THE LOSING OF A FRIEND" (1955-1956).

In the current movie "The Wild Bunch" is a line of dialogue appropriate to mention here, "we all dream of being a child again." No descrying that assumption when it comes to the subject of serials!

While meandering back thru the years with THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS, you'll encounter some of the nicest broads, athletes, and bastards imaginable.

THE EMBRYONIC YEARS

1929 - 1933

EDITOR'S NOTE: All serial titles are in capital letters; reference dates are the year of release, and not necessarily the year produced. Names of chapter episodes are shown in italics and within quotation marks. Titles of motion pictures, other than serials or their chapters, are printed in italics without quotes. Acknowledgment is gratefully given to the studios Columbia, Mascot, Republic and Universal. But for them, there never would have been THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS.

Certainly no more apropos title could have been christened the initial chapter of the first-born serial with "sound" than *"Into the Unknown."* Mascot Pictures took the fateful plunge on 8/20/1929 with ten episodes of gorilla warfare called KING OF THE KONGO.

A synchronized musical score, snatches of dialogue, and some audio effects heralded the king. The then-dying religion of Serialism (practiced chiefly on Saturday afternoons) enjoyed a much-needed shot of hormones: noise. *Wonderful noise!* Skidding tires, thundering hoofs, crackling flames, the heroine screaming at her first glimpse of the roaring gorilla, gave momentum to the action. (Not *all* of this commotion took place in KING. Subsequent serials, yes.) Much later, meaningful orchestral accompaniments were added that genuinely heightened the chapter endings to lure audiences into returning "next week."

Others heard from in KING OF THE KONGO included several talents that deserve passing mention here. Jacqueline Logan, a product of Corsicana, Texas, and Ziegfeld girl (1920) lent considerable beauty to the part of the heroine. Her role was an abrupt departure from the (voiceless) reformed prostitute, Mary Magdalene, she played in C. B. DeMille's original production of *The King of Kings* two years earlier.

Paying tribute to Miss Logan were a trio of (then) familiar names. Walter Miller protected her virginity right up until chapter ten, *"Jungle Justice."* Justice? He married her and not the gorilla! In later years he would make amends for his indiscretion and contribute a more definite impression in serials as an s.o.b.

Well down the ladder in the cast was the name: Boris Karloff. He had already "chewed the scenery" in several silent serials for Mascot. Karloff was not to discipline his acting until later.

Direction was in the hands of Richard Thorpe, who in the coming years made a reputation for himself at M-G-M.

If Mascot led with the king, surely Universal Pictures must be credited with playing the ace. Five weeks later, on 9/30/1929, they released THE ACE OF SCOTLAND YARD. It was (probably) a welcome change of venue for the Saturday crowd—all the way from *"The Fight at the Lion's Pit"* (episode six of KING) to *"The Depths of Limehouse"* (chapter four of ACE).

The three pursuers (and more often pursued) through London's menacing shadows were Crauford Kent, Florence Allen and Grace Cunard. Directorial chores for the ten episodes went to Ray Taylor. He had the historic good fortune of being at the helm of Universal's first talking serial and the ordeal of directing their second from last serial some 17 years later. To his credit, during the interim he was responsible for many of Universal's successes as well as two of the "best" produced by Republic Pictures.

Universal ventured into their own jungle on 12/9/1929 with TARZAN THE TIGER, "fifteen giant episodes in sound." This was advertised as based on the story *Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar* by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Tarzan (Frank Merrill) and Jane (Natalie Kingston) were ripe subjects to keep theater seats filled. Exhibitors must have been gleefully happy with Universal's ballyhoo; however, members of the P.T.A. must have been equally affronted with the campaign's lustfulness. For example: "*See* the slave market, where beautiful women are put on the auction block—where souls are sold for a few grains of gold—or less!"; "*See* a beautiful white woman snatched from her gorgeous boudoir and dragged

in (sic) the innermost reaches of the inaccessible jungle!". Kids were probably more intrigued in *seeing*: "the scheming sheik; the false friend; the robber band; the jungle gangsters; the bloodthirsty Holy men; the human sacrifice." And, naturally, "the menangerie of wild beasts!". Keeping everything in orderly disarray was director Henry MacRae, eventually to become producer of Universal chapter plays.

If Louise Lorraine's name had box office lure for Mascot, then it was indeed sporting of them to return her to her alma mater, Universal, for their first serial of the 1930 season, THE JADE BOX. *"The Jade of Jeopardy"* led off "ten smashing episodes", directed by Taylor, and released on 3/24/1930. Aiding and abetting Miss Lorraine in this "mystery thriller" were Jack Perrin (best described by the title of a 1927 picture in which he starred, *Fire and Steel*). Here were speed, romance, drama, thrills, mystery, production value, class, suspense, music and sound effects—each with an (!).

THE LIGHTNING EXPRESS, complete with (a) *"Runaway Freight"* in chapter 7, whetted the appetite of railroad addicts starting on 6/2/1930. Planes were to capture the imagination at a later date. Although Louise Lorraine was around for all ten episodes, the most notable appearance was that of Lane Chandler in the male lead. Chandler had appeared the previous year as the third male lead opposite Greta Garbo in *The Single Standard.* (John Mack Brown, who in coming years carved his own nitch in Serialism history, "got" Garbo.) And again Henry MacRae sat in the director's chair and rode THE LIGHTNING EXPRESS hellbent along mighty dangerous rails.

Reed Howes made his debut in talking serials as TERRY OF THE TIMES. This particularly good looking athlete (the original Arrow Shirt "collar man") had already done yeoman work on the stage. However, Howes' no nonsense education at the Harvard Graduating School must have awed the writers who conceived and developed the character of TERRY. This was obvious with their selection of the title for chapter one: *"The Mystic Mendicants."* Few (aged 6 thru 90) would ever have the remotest exposure to the word mendicants. (Medicare, yes!). Even today this editor had to make reference to Webster for a definition, which is presumed to give some inkling as to the nefarious scoundrels who confronted reporter TERRY. "A mendicant is a beggar. When the word is used as an adjective, it describes a person as practicing beggary; living by alms (as the Franciscans, Carmelites, and Augustinians)."

Curiously, August had a profound influence on the life of Howes. He appeared as TERRY in his first talking serial on August 11, 1930; the Catholic order of Augustinian friars was suggested (tho remotely) in the title of the kick-off chapter of TERRY, and he died on August 6, 1964.

Female companionship was offered by Lotus Thompson and Mary Grant—all under the knowing hand of director Henry MacRae right thru episode 10, *"A Race for Love"*—certainly lacking the sophistication of chapter one's title.

THE INDIANS ARE COMING was one of the most costly serials up to its release on 10/10/1930. This series of Cowboy-Indian escapades was directed by MacRae. History records it as being pre-released to the 5,886 seat Roxy Theater in New York City, "the cathedral of the motion picture," during September of 1930—some three and a half years after the premiere of the movie palace at 50th Street and 7th Avenue on Friday, 3/11/1927. (Unhappily, the Roxy's concluding chapter was written in the summer of 1960. Serial production was demolished five years earlier, tho the last release was held back until 1956.)

Allene Ray, the heroine, was no stranger to serials. She had built up a loyal audience during the six years following her serial debut in 1924. Thus it was fitting that this idol should provide what the Roxy promised: "an unforgettable thrill!".

Principal support to Miss Ray was provided by western star Tim McCoy. Together they lived up to the innuendo of chapter one: *"Pals in Buckskin."* Others in the cast included Edmund Cobb, Francis Ford and Miles "Bud" Osborne—a trio of prolific contributors to talking serials. Chapter titles were simple to comprehend and easily stimulated the adrenalin. *"Hate's Harvest"* and *"Redskin's Vengeance"* aptly conveyed what went on until chapter 12, *"The Trail's End"*, majestically brought Universal's contribution of four silent-talking serials in 1930 to a happy conclusion.

Mascot Pictures gave birth to a lone child in 1930. While they lived up to their later advertising signature of "Blazing the Trail" with the first sound serial in 1929, they literally broke the conversation barrier with THE LONE DEFENDER, the first *all-talking* chapter play. The star was the already popular German shepherd, Rin-Tin-Tin (holding the reins), ably assisted by veteran Walter Miller (in the saddle), and teenagers June Marlowe and Buzz Barton. Their chief adversary was "The Ghost." Action was again under the direction of Dick Thorpe.

STANDING (and tied-up, at that) is Tom Tyler; seated behind the desk, "misunderstanding" William Desmond. Obviously, Tyler is "misunderstood" and had better come up with some pretty smart dialogue to get out of this fix in *"Battle of the Strong"*, episode #4 of PHANTOM OF THE WEST.

On New Year's Day, 1931, Mascot released the ten episoder PHANTOM OF THE WEST. This was Tom Tyler's first of many serials and his introduction to all-talking pictures. (Later he was to play THE PHANTOM of comic strip fame, as well as CAPTAIN MARVEL.) He entered pictures in 1924 at twenty-one.

A year older than Tyler was the popular silent serial star Joe Bonomo, certainly the Apollo of athletes of his era. He had been brought to the attention of Hollywood producers as a result of his winning the "perfect man" contest in New York City, and made his first serial in 1923.

Also featured in the cast was Kermit Maynard. Although never to reach the star status of his older brother (Ken), he nevertheless did manage to graduate from stand-in and supporting roles to having his name appear above the picture's title in minor westerns.

Playing the masked "Phantom", leader of the League of the Lawless, was Tom Dugan. Dugan was perhaps best known for his comic protrayals, such as the harassing brother-in-law of Lloyd Hamilton in the 1933 Mack Sennett slapstick affair, *Too Many Highballs.*

Heroine was Dorothy Gulliver. D. Ross Lederman, an expert manipulator of actors and animals alike to achieve maximum motion, handled the direction. One of his earlier accomplishments was leading Rin-Tin-Tin in *A Dog of the Regiment* in the 20's.

Mascot's next entry was "the most thrilling wild animal serial ever filmed!"—so said the advertising for KING OF THE WILD (3/1/1931). The pressbook goes on to say: "the story is laid in picturesque India, on the Arabian desert, and in the heart of the African jungles. International intrigue and personal vengeance motivate the plot, which provides a mystery that will defy solution until the final chapter.

"Walter Miller heads the cast in one of his usual dashing roles. Tom Santschi and Boris Karloff are two unscrupulous villains. Nora Lane plays the leading lady."

Karloff's role was minor, that of a sheik called *Mustapha.* It came 9 months before his acknowledged excellent performance as the mute monster in *Frankenstein* (he did make guttural noises!). Karloff bowed out of serials after his appearance in KING.

CLIMAX of the first episode promised to be "the most daring, startling action ever screened!: the plight of the passengers and crew of a sinking ship—tossed about in a tropical storm—attacked by a horde of lions, tigers and leopards, which have escaped from their cages in the hold of the vessel."

On the left, with the sinister leer and popped eyeballs (symbolic of the stark, cold beauty of the Arabian desert) is *Dakka,* impersonated by Mischa Auer. In front of Auer is hero-in-disguise *Robert Grant* (Walter Miller) — an American accused of murder, sentenced to life imprisonment, but who manages to escape. He spends 12 chapters in KING OF THE WILD finding the evidence to prove his innocence.

On 6/1/1931 a modern western complete with telephones and radios, THE VANISHING LEGION, introduced a new menace: "The Whisperer." Combating this unknown villain were Harry Carey and Edwina Booth. Both had already acquired acclaim as the leads in M-G-M's *Trader Horn,* still considered a classic. They were to go on to make two more serials together.

Child star Frankie Darrow (he soon dropped the "w") became a popular idol of matinee ticket buyers. He had the good fortune to possess small stature and perennial youth. Tho he made LEGION in 1931 at the age of 13, eleven years later he still had not made the transition from juvenile to mature adult in JUNIOR G-MEN OF THE AIR.

B. (for Breezy) Reaves Eason kept the action in the forefront. Somewhere along the line he swapped an "a" for an "e" in his name and became Reeves—or else the poster artist didn't know how to spell (which seems more logical).

Joe Bonomo (dark shirt) and Harry Carey ("resting" on the fender) having a go at it in chapter one, *"The Voice from the Void."* Look closely at the cowboy upper right. He *must be* Walter Brennan, tho his name does not appear in the cast credits.

Mascot next capitalized on the already established name of football hero Harold (Red) Grange as THE GALLOPING GHOST. This modern day thriller had action aplenty—complete with airplanes that zeroed in on theater screens 9/1/1931.

This was Red's third screen appearance. He had earlier appeared in the silent *One Minute to Play* (1926) and *A Racing Romeo* (1927)—neither received with very much enthusiasm. He never ranked as a top screen attraction, but no one can deny that in his three years as number "77" on the University of Illinois football squad he earned a deserved reputation as one of the speediest "backs" in the game. To illustrate: in the Michigan vs. Illinois game of 1924, Red took the opening kick-off and returned it 95 yards for a touchdown. In the next twelve minutes, he went on to score three more times.

However, it took young "Lochinvar" Red Grange twelve Saturdays as THE GALLOPING GHOST to score with Dorothy Gulliver. Director Reeves Eason (assisted by Armand Schaefer) coached Grange's backside in and out of peril both on and off the (Clay College) football field.

THE PLOT! In an attempt to save his friend and teammate Buddy Courtland (Francis X. Bushman, Jr.) from disgrace, Red Grange finds himself wrongfully accused of accepting a bribe from a gambling ring. *Meanwhile,* word had been received that Buddy is at a hospital, towards which a mysterious cripple, Doctor Julian (Theodore Lorch), is making his way in company with Irene (Gwen Lee), who is secretly married to Buddy.

Barred from his team, Red fails to convince Buddy's sister Barbara (Dorothy Gulliver) of his innocence, and sees her drive off with James Elton (Walter Miller), who poses as a friend, but is in reality the head of the gambling ring.

Accused of killing Tod Burns, another teammate, Red follows up a clue to the Mogul Taxi Garage, headquarters of the gambling ring. Here a fight ensues, and a band of rival cabmen led by Jerry O'Flynn (Tom Dugan) come to Red's aid. During the melee, *Red is knocked under an elevator—which begins to slowly descend toward his unconscious body!* (Wind-up of episode 8!).

It looked as if Red was doomed, but when the elevator approached within three inches of his prone form, Dr. Julian (unexpectedly!) hobbled forward and seized him by the shoulders. He dragged him from under the sinking platform, and Red escaped its crushing bulk by seconds.

LATER at Dr. Julian's house: *"Look out, Red!"* Barbara screamed. *"Behind you!"* The cry came too late, for even as Red turned, the heavy walking stick crashed down, the crook of it striking him on the skull with stunning force. Red pitched forward unconscious. (Surprisingly, it was Dr. Julian who wielded the cane!)

AT THE SAME TIME, a dark shape swooped towards the house from out of the starry sky. It was descending in a long nose-dive. Elton was the pilot, though the darkness and his goggles combined to mask his identity, and, while with one hand he operated the controls, the man grasped in the other that deadly object with which he was to seal Red Grange's *doom.*

Zooming out of the heavens, he dropped to within 50 feet of the roof top of Dr. Julian's house. Then he straightened the plane, and in the instant that he did so *he hurled the bomb at the building underneath him!* (So climaxed chapter 9 — *"The Sign in the Sky".*)

Rin-Tin-Tin made his farewell appearance in Mascot's THE LIGHTNING WARRIOR, released 11/1/1931. He died the following year. Certainly deserved credit is due Rin-Tin-Tin for his agility plus his considerable acting ability in keeping villains at bay and a young audience on the edge of their collective fannies. However, Lee Duncan, Rinty's owner and trainer, rates equal mention. It was he (and only he) who Rinty loved and respected enough to get him to respond to other's direction. These chores for THE LIGHTNING WARRIOR were divided between Armand Schaefer and Ben Kline. Schaefer made future contributions to serials (particularly in the cases of Tom Mix and Gene Autry), while Kline became a cinematographer.

Supporting Rin-Tin-Tin were Frankie Darro, Georgia Hale, Theodore Lorch and George Brent. This was virile Brent's only appearance in serials. One wonders how much the experience contributed to his future roles, especially those opposite such talented ladies as Barbara Stanwyck (*My Reputation*) and Bette Davis (*The Great Lie*).

Since Mascot had galloped into the new year with a western, Universal Studios chose a "big top" theme to compete in the serial market on 1/12/1931 with their release of SPELL OF THE CIRCUS. Featured were Francis X. Bushman, Jr., Tom London and Monte Montague.

Chapter titles gave some idea as to the excitement unreeled: *"A Menacing Monster"* (#1); *"A Scream of Terror"* (#4); *"A Leap for Life"* (#5).

Bushman (Jr.) never enjoyed the good fortune of his father in the ability to make several million hearts throb; though, he did exceed his famous 5'11" dad in height by a full 3½ inches. When the occasion dictated, Junior was billed as Ralph Bushman.

Also under the SPELL OF THE CIRCUS was the dark-haired beauty, Alberta Vaughn. Earlier she had wound up in the arms of Tim McCoy in Universal's first full length talking picture, *Daring Danger*.

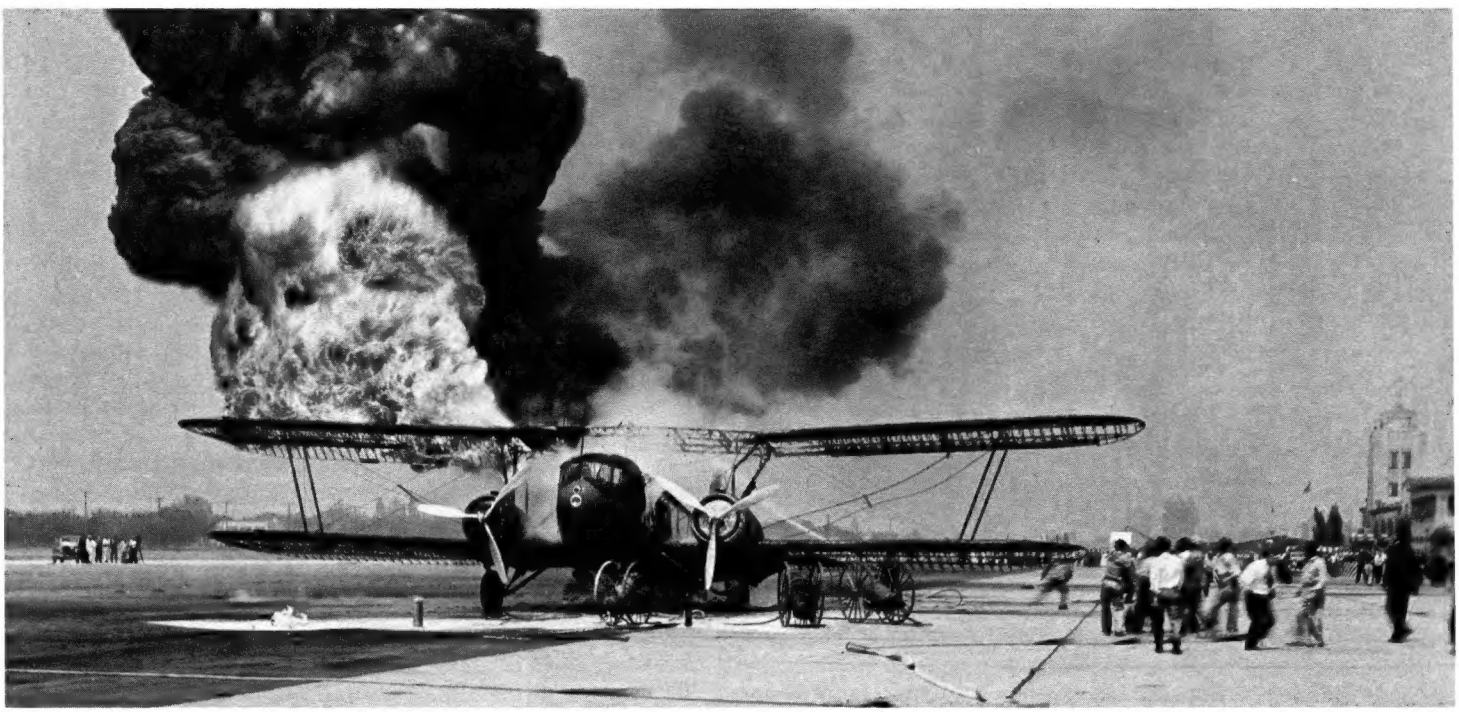
Robert F. Hill got the director's assignment. He had already distinguished himself with serials eleven years earlier by directing Elmo Lincoln (the *original* movie "Tarzan") and Louise Lorraine (though retired, she is today very much alive) along rails of death and through walls of steel in *The Flaming Disc*. Interestingly, one of Hill's hobbies was training parrots to talk.

Next from Universal came FINGERPRINTS on 3/23/1931. The stars were Kenneth Harlan and Edna Murphy, while Ray Taylor handled the direction. Harlan made little dent as a "lead", but he did leave a nice impression later when cast in supporting roles.

"The Dance of Death" (#1) started things moving and *"The Final Reckoning"* (#10) saw to it hero, heroine and villain got their just rewards.

Tim McCoy returned to the scene 6/2/1931 and swapped his cowboy Stetson for a fireman's helmet to appear in his last serial, the non-western melodrama, HEROES OF THE FLAMES. The then 45-year old Robert F. Hill saw to it that 40-year old firefighter McCoy delivered an action filled, no panting allowed, performance. Marion Shockley went along for the ride.

A younger Timothy John Fitzgerald McCoy had been commissioned Colonel in the U.S. Cavalry. During World War I he was awarded the Legion of Honor by the French government. For advice rendered in World War II, he added the Medaille de l'Aeronautiques. The well-groomed Colonel is still active today (he's heading for 80) and appeared several years ago at Charlotte, North Carolina, in the "Hollywood Hillbilly Stage Show." When asked by a member of the audience if he played a guitar, he is reliably reported to have responded: "No, I ride horses!".



BY AND BY, a photo such as this will inject itself — if for no other reason than to say: " 'THE WONDERFUL YEARS' are coming!" Behind-the-scene action is from THE BLACK COIN (a Weiss-Mintz Production - 1936). It was not a particularly good serial. As a matter of fact, it was lousy. But an occasional spectacular staging made it all *seem* wonderful. Study this one carefully. Observe the camera crew (left) grinding away, while the production and sound personnel (right, and out of range from the camera's viewpoint) display a certain amount of anxiety. Too, of the three water cannons (also off-camera), only one is jettisoning its load.

Universal Pictures' DANGER ISLAND was released on 8/24/1931, promising that leads Kenneth Harlan and Lucile Browne would be kept in continuous jeopardy. The chapter titles started out on an intriguing note: *"The Coast of Peril"* (#1); *"Demons of the Pool"* (#3); *"Devil Worshippers"* (#4) . . .

. . . and *"Mutiny!"* (#5), led by mischief-maker Walter Miller (sporting a well-clipped mustache, then symbolic of evil). Midway the titles got redundant: *"Human Sacrifice"* (#8) and *"Captured for Sacrifice"* (#10). But the wind-up was a sure-fire winner to fill theater seats for the climax: *"The Fire God's Vengeance"* (#12).

Sidekick to the hero was Andy Devine, young enough (about 27) to be sort of appealing to the native girls. Note Walter Miller, with the sun helmet, not missing one of Andy's flirtatious finger gestures; and, the "couldn't give a damn" expression of the extra sitting on the pier. Ray Taylor kept the action plentiful until . . .

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

TO SUBSCRIBE for *six issues* (one year), a reasonable rate has been established: $5.00 (U.S.A. and Canada) and $6.00 (elsewhere). Reasonable because each issue mailed to a *subscriber* will go out 1st Class (meaning a healthy 14% goes to "Uncle Sam"); no compromise will be made with paper or printing quality; too, this being a "hobby" there is a total absence of desire to realize a profit, but as a "business" there is a hopeful wish to break even. *Publication is bi-monthly. Single copies are $1.00 each.*

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. . . George Beldam appeared in the person of Rex Bell, the 25-year old who volunteered his services BATTLING WITH BUFFALO BILL. Others in the saddle included Edmund Cobb, Joe Bonomo and Tom Tyler as "Bill." Inexhaustible Ray Taylor staged the action.

Rex, to his credit, was "likeable." He capitalized on this in 1931 by persuading the publicity riddled (all of it bad) glamour girl that had "IT", Clara Bow, to lawfully join him at his ranch in Searchlight, Nevada.

STORY LINE. The western town of Hard Rock has a gold strike. Machinations of an unscrupulous gang, led by gambler Jim Rodney (William Desmond), include plans to "grab" every claim thru the simple expedient of having the entire town wiped out by Indians. Rodney's men incite the Cheyennes to rebellion by stealing their horses and killing a squaw.

Buffalo Bill Cody (Tom Tyler) witnesses the Indian attack and secures the aid of the U.S. Cavalry in quelling the raid. Hard Rock is saved!

Undaunted, Rodney opposes young Dave Archer (Rex Bell) in an election for town marshall. Rodney wins when a fake gold rush lures Dave's supporters away to nearby Mandan Creek.

Archer's troubles are compounded when a prospector is ambushed and killed by one of Rodney's minions. Rodney craftily swings the blame on to Archer and the clean-limbed youngster is *"Sentenced to Death"* (title of episode 8) by the townspeople and strung up to a tree for lynching. The fadeout comes with the rope taking the strain of Dave Archer's weight!

Another instant and Dave Archer's neck would have been broken. However, a shot crashes out and the rope is snapped as neatly as if a knife-blade had severed it! It was Cody that galloped to the rescue.

MUCH LATER, two Blackfeet Indians (most cruel of the redskins and most hostile toward the whites) spot Cody in the distance riding along the trail, bound for Hard Rock. "Here is our chance to kill him! Chief Big Crow will think well of us if we take his scalp back to the village with us!"

Both take to a tree and agilely crawl along a stout bough stretching across the trail that will place them directly above Cody when he passes. *Their knives are drawn in readiness for the attack!*

With one accord, they fling themselves upon Cody while giving out with shrill, murderous yells!

A flashing knife tears into Cody's sleeve. Then, a pair of wiry arms encircle him, tugging him out of the saddle.

Taken completely by surprise, the odds are against Cody. Once on the ground, the Indians sprawl over him . . . the sunlight glittering on the blades of their knives that now are poised to plunge into Cody's flesh. (A ripping conclusion to chapter 9—*"The Death Trap!"*—of BATTLING WITH BUFFALO BILL.) Released by Universal on 11/23/1931.

Two independently made serials were released in 1930 or very early 1931: THE MYSTERY TROOPER and THE SIGN OF THE WOLF. (The release date is based on both being advertised in the 1932 *Motion Picture Almanac,* and available thru Ritchey Export Corporation, N.Y.)

Directed by Stuart Paton, THE MYSTERY TROOPER featured Blanche Mehaffey (of the silents) and youngster, Buzz Barton. The hero was Robert Frazer. In the years to follow, Frazer made an excellent villain. They spend 10 chapters looking for lost gold in Canada.

Since dogs were popular, and Rin-Tin-Tin was unavailable, a canine named King got the lead role in THE SIGN OF THE WOLF. Assisting him in this western were Rex Lease, Virginia Brown Faire and Joe Bonomo.

(To Be Continued)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Here are the names of many *(certainly not all)* of those who made a contribution to the "talking" serial — actor, actress, stuntman, director, etc. — who, it is sad to say, concluded chapter 13 and talk no more. Comments following each listing include, in this editor's opinion, the title of the serial for which they are best remembered.

Substantiating birth dates is an impossible task. Records lie (though discreetly) and usually in favor of the artist involved. For example, various historians "authenticate" Bela Lugosi as being born in 1882, 1884, 1885 and 1888. He was born, it is hoped for his mother's sake, but once. Cruel as it may be, the birth dates shown in this and subsequent issues are the earliest chronicled. Concerning the dates of expiration listed below and following the individual's name, they are (after all) difficult to play around with. Thus, they should be deadly accurate.

Eddie Acuff (1956) — Not a comedian in the usual sense of the word, but a likeable choice to be the hero's sidekick in JUNGLE GIRL (1941).

Ernie Adams (1947) — Flamboyant spats, pin-striped suit and brocade vest made him *the* ideal devil's assistant in LAW OF THE WILD (1934). Still menacing in THE BLACK WIDOW (1947) 13 years later.

Frank Albertson (1964) — THE LOST SPECIAL (1932) gave him top billing. He wasn't seen in a serial again until 10 years passed, when he lent able support to the *Dead End Kids* (4 of the original 6) in JUNIOR G-MEN OF THE AIR (1942).

Lionel Atwill (1946) — No doubt about it, his suave *Scarab* in CAPTAIN AMERICA (1943) was one of the better parts he had in a distinguished career.

Mischa Auer (1967) — Funny he should look like what an oily villain should look like in KING OF THE WILD (1931), then five years later start a whole new career as a comic sensation in "My Man Godfrey."

Clyde Beatty (1965) — His diminuative stature made you wonder how he ever became the "world's greatest animal trainer." Stood tallest in his performance in DARKEST AFRICA (1936).

Rex Bell (1962) — BATTLING WITH BUFFALO BILL (1931) rang the bell—no alternative. Found politics more to his liking. Became Lieutenant-Governor of Nevada and Clara Bow's husband in reverse order.

Noah Beery, Sr. (1946) — He lent genuine evil to his role of the nefarious *Ace Hanlon* in ADVENTURES OF RED RYDER (1940). Some will say his *Marsden* in ZORRO RIDES AGAIN (1937) was better. No argument.

Willie Best (1962) — Colorful in THE MONSTER AND THE APE (1945) as *Flash.*

Charles Bickford (1967) — Amazed he would even consent to appear in a serial: RIDERS OF DEATH VALLEY (1941). His good acting helped an uninspired script.

Monte Blue (1963) — Best role came in UNDERSEA KINGDOM (1936). Casting him as the psychomaniac *Khan* couldn't have been a wiser choice.

Stanley Blystone (1956) — In serials for a long time, he made a good *Lynch* in KING OF THE TEXAS RANGERS (1941). Looked like what a crook who gets hung *should* look like.

Hobart Bosworth (1943) — Embarrassingly old (65) for the role of the half-naked *Chingachgook,* father to 16-year old Frank Coghlan, Jr. (as *Uncas*), in THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS (1932), but a grand actor.

Otto Brower (1946) — An action director. Must be given co-credit for the serial that started this editor down the primrose path to the Cinderella or Plaza Theater *every* Saturday afternoon to view in all its awesome splendor MYSTERY MOUNTAIN (1934).

Frank Buck (1950) — JUNGLE MENACE, his only contribution to serials, led off Columbia Pictures' chapter-plays starting in 1937. A nebulous distinction.

Smiley Burnette (1967) — In DICK TRACY (1937) he created the character role of *Mike McGurk* with enough stupidity (thanks to the screenplay writers) to get demoted to westerns where (and this is a guess) he realized a fortune playing the buffoon.

Edgar Rice Burroughs (1950) — It is hoped they paid him dearly for practically decimating in three talkie serials the character he created. THE NEW ADVENTURES OF TARZAN (1935) was the best of the worst. Later, JUNGLE GIRL (1941) upstaged her male equivalent with superior scenery and acting.

Francis X. Bushman, Sr. (1966) — He was used to little advantage in DICK TRACY (1937). What people forget is that he had a voice of resonant quality. Radio made excellent use of it.

Ralph Byrd (1952) — His finest hour was in DICK TRACY VS. CRIME, INC. (1941) even though much of the footage was borrowed from his 3 previous Tracy serials. He died too damn young: 42.

Bound and gagged forever: (l. to r.) Kenneth Harlan (1967); Ted Pearson (1961); and, Ralph Byrd (1952). As the trio appeared in Republic's DICK TRACY'S G-MEN (1939).

Harry Carey (1947) — Made 3 talking serials and all of them with Edwina Booth. THE DEVIL HORSE (1932) was probably the best for no particular reason.

Leo Carrillo (1961) — Difficult to believe he was all of 81 when he bit the dust. RIDERS OF DEATH VALLEY (1941) marked his in-and-out serial.

George Cleveland (1965) — Remembered best for his role in the earlier nothings of TV's "Lassie" series. (Today the show is one of the best wildlife adventures produced!) Mr. Cleveland lent a memorable assist to the triumphs of THE LONE RANGER (1938) and the silencing of the DRUMS OF FU MANCHU (1940).

Morgan Cox (1968) — His writing credits introduced many serials. Just what he personally contributed is difficult to assess. Since he collaborated on the original story DICK TRACY (1937), and *not* the screenplay, Cox deserves veneration.

Grace Cunard (1967) — Heroine in dozens of silent serials. Then gracefully aged her way out of ingénue roles. Appeared briefly in GANG BUSTERS (1942).

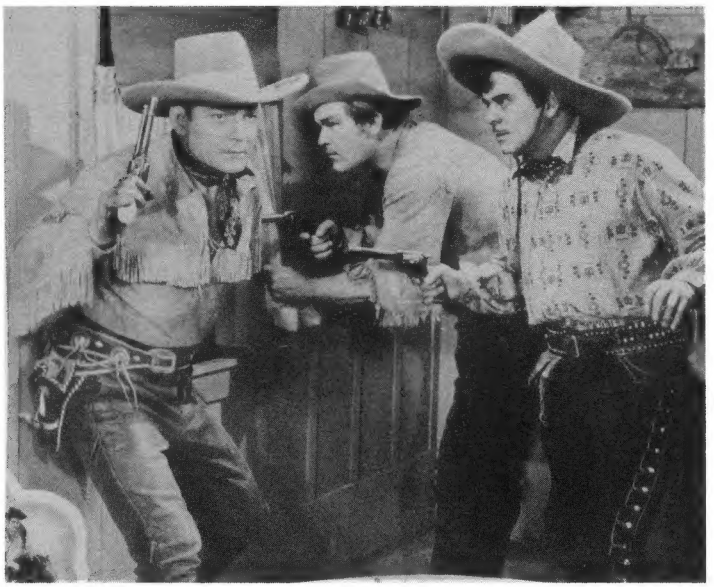
John Davidson (1968) — DICK TRACY VS. CRIME, INC. (1941) gave him a role (Lucifer) he could really sink his fangs into. The best assistant a master criminal could ever hope for.

Reginald Denny (1967) — Fared well on Broadway in "My Fair Lady." Supported Frank Buck in JUNGLE MENACE (1937). That could (should!) have eclipsed his acting career for all time.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1930) — His story THE LOST SPECIAL served as the nucleus for the twelve chapter serial (1932). The best short story this editor has ever read. Now *that* is saying something!

Tom Dugan (1958) — How can you be the leader of the "League of the Lawless" in PHANTOM OF THE WEST (1931) and not have it selected as your most significant contribution to Serialism?

Ralph Dunn (1968) — He has been chastised by a few for his performance as the arch-criminal in THE LONE RANGER RIDES AGAIN (1939). But not from this corner!



Today their six-shooters are silent: (l. to r.) Buck Jones (1942); Guinn "Big Boy" Williams (1962); and, Leo Carrillo (1961). All three were heroes in Universal's RIDERS OF DEATH VALLEY (1941).

Gordon Elliott (1965) — THE GREAT ADVENTURES OF WILD BILL HICKOK (1938) gave him the opportunity to change his name to "Bill", then "Wild Bill", and eventually "William." Each change led to more lucrative roles (and gold) along the trail.

William Farnum (1953) — His two best parts were *Sharad* in UNDERSEA KINGDOM (1936) and *Father McKim* in THE LONE RANGER (1938).

Robert Frazer (1944) — He turned out to be the masked *El Shaitan* in THE THREE MUSKETEERS (1932); and, THE CLUTCHING HAND (1936). Another actor you thoroughly enjoyed hating. Played the *High Priest* in THE TIGER WOMAN (1944), same year he passed away.

Hoot Gibson (1962) — In THE PAINTED STALLION (1937), his only talking serial, he stood out among the cast—even though he had the worst kind of competition imaginable: a beautiful Indian maiden and her castrated horse.

Paul Guilfoyle (1961) — Always a character actor and seldom top-featured until he appeared as THE SCARLET HORSEMAN (1946). True, his name appeared third in the listing, but it amounted to equal billing.

Kenneth Harlan (1967) — Starred in two serials, but contributed a supporting role in many, many others. His versatility in playing the double agent was best exemplified in enacting the hero in DANGER ISLAND (1931) and the villain in THE MYSTERIOUS PILOT (1937).

(Guy) Edward Hearn (1963) — Off hand remember him best in MYSTERY MOUNTAIN (1934), even though he didn't turn out to be the masked *Rattler*.

Robert F. Hill (1966) — As a director, he didn't have much material to work with in BLAKE OF SCOTLAND YARD (1937). Really left his mark on silent serials.

Jack Holt (1951) — He made a single serial, HOLT OF THE SECRET SERVICE (1941). The fifteen chapters seemed an eternity and should have been scrapped. AND THIS EDITOR DID SEE SOME OF THEM at the time of release—regretfully!

James W. Horne (1942) — Directed or co-directed an even dozen of Columbia Pictures' earliest serials, starting in 1938. The film cutter and musical director did absolutely nothing to enhance his efforts. If he had a best, it would be THE SHADOW (1940).

Reed Howes (1964) — He was TERRY OF THE TIMES (1931), which this editor did not see. Presumably his supporting role in ZORRO RIDES AGAIN (1937) was equal, if not better. Had the distinction of appearing in the *last* serial produced for Saturday afternoon consumption: BLAZING THE OVERLAND TRAIL (1956). Ironically, his character part was called *Dunn*.

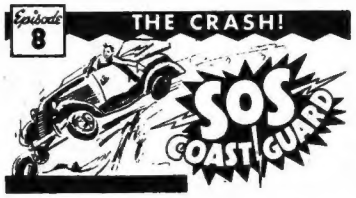
Jack Ingram (1969) — Another prolific contributor to serials as a "heavy." Made a wily *Slasher*—one of *Pa Stark's* five (presumed) bastard sons in DICK TRACY RETURNS (1938).

Charles "Buck" Jones (1942) — On Friday, November 28, 1942, 498 people were swallowed up in the panic, smoke and flames that destroyed the Coconut Grove night club in Boston. Jones died in the holocaust. Would you believe that Chapter 10 of RIDERS OF DEATH VALLEY (1941) was prophetically called *"Devouring Flames"*? Sad, but true.

(To Be Continued)

PREVIEWS OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

"Get the ether ready . . . just enough to quiet him . . . as he is about to undergo the same brain operation I performed on his brother Gordon." So said *Moloch*. UPCOMING! An in-depth study of DICK TRACY (Republic - 1937). L. to R., Tracy's deranged brother *(Gordon)*; the "*Spider*", with hat and wig to disguise his true identity; *Tracy* on the table; and, the hunchbacked *Moloch* with hypo poised for injection.



TAILSPIN is just one of many serials that will be given a "long look" in future issues. Others include: THE RETURN OF CHANDU (THE MAGICIAN); LAW OF THE WILD; BURN 'EM UP BARNES; THE LONE RANGER; THE FIGHTING DEVIL DOGS; DRUMS OF FU MANCHU; ZORRO RIDES AGAIN. And lots more!

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION
IS DETAILED ON PAGE 8

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

STARTING with the Dec.-Jan. issue (out Saturday, 12/6) we will be printing display advertising and a classified section. Although the content of THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS is keyed to serials, *no such restriction is* placed on advertising matter. Obviously there are many serial enthusiasts equally interested in other phases of motion pictures.

In accepting advertising, we must be "hard-nosed" to help protect the legitimate selling/buying people in the film-still-poster field. No advertising using a P.O. Box for a return address will be accepted from any person or company who does not transmit to this editor (for his files) their business or home street address *and* telephone number.

ADVERTISING RATES are payable in advance: $50.00 a page; $25.00 a half-page; $20.00 a column (1/3rd page); $15.00 a quarter-page; and, $8.00 an eighth-page. CLASSIFIED SECTION: 30 words or less $2.00, then 5¢ per word.

CLOSING DATE for advertising in the Dec.-Jan. issue is November 7th. Please address *all* correspondence to ROBERT MALCOMSON, 38559 ASBURY PK., MT. CLEMENS, MICH. 48043.

ALL OF THE PICTURES in this issue, as well as those forthcoming, are from the editor's own collection. GRATITUDE is extended to the wonderful people at *Movie Star News,* 212 E. 14th St., N.Y.C. and, *Collectors Book Store,* 6763 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif. They gave this editor unlimited access to their serial material during many visits. More important than making the sale, they treated this editor with patience, trust and courtesy far beyond the "norm".

NEXT ISSUE: a look at A. Conan Doyle's THE LOST SPECIAL, serialized by Universal in 1932. ". . . the train was running with frantic speed, rolling and rocking over the rotted line, while the wheels made a frightful screaming sound upon the rusted surface. I was close to them, and could see their faces. Caratal was praying, I think—there was something like a rosary dangling out of his hand. The other roared like a bull who smells the blood of the slaughterhouse . . ."